

School Construction Grants

This year, the legislature approved over \$40 million in new school construction aid to the towns of the 24th District. The grants will go towards projects at Bethel High School, Rogers Park and Broadview Middle Schools in Danbury, Danbury High School, New Fairfield Middle/High School and the Academy for International Studies in Danbury.

WestConn

Quality secondary education is right outside the door. Our community is very fortunate to be the home of Western Connecticut State University. Over the past decade the state has made a commitment to renovating the state university system and 2005 was no different. Under this year's bonding package, WestConn will receive nearly \$72 million in funding for improvements to the Danbury campus. Included in that funding is an allocation for a new Fine and Performing Arts Building. This new facility stands to make WestConn a true leader in performing arts education in Connecticut. In addition, funding will also be allocated to the university for safety improvements and renovations to existing academic facilities.



Indian Casino Update

In October, the federal government refused to grant sovereign nation status to the Schaghticoke Tribal Nation. The Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) initially granted recognition to the Schaghticoques and the Eastern Pequots in 2004, but an appeal panel overturned that ruling last May. The United States Department of the Interior subsequently upheld that reversal, stating that the Tribal Nation failed to meet two of the seven mandatory requirements for federal recognition — continuous political authority and community. All of this, of course, is good news for our entire region. Connecticut already has the two largest casinos in North America at Foxwoods and Mohegan Sun, and further recognition threatened to double that number right here in our own backyard. While the Schaghticoke Tribal Nation is expected to appeal the ruling in court, no final decision of the federal government regarding tribal recognition has ever been overturned.



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2005
Legislative Report

State Senator

David J. Cappiello

Serving the people of:

Bethel

Danbury

New Fairfield

Sherman

State Senator David J. Cappiello

Dear Neighbor,

The 2005 session of the Connecticut General Assembly has ended. The year began with a great deal of anticipation due to the fact that it was Governor M. Jodi Rell's first legislative session since taking her position as Connecticut's chief executive in the summer of 2004. It was soon apparent that Governor Rell was up to the challenge of leading our state while restoring integrity and honor to government. This year's session ended on time without the partisanship that has beleaguered the legislative process in recent years.

Our state faced many tough issues in 2005. Some received national attention, such as the potential closing of the U.S. Naval Submarine Base in Groton and the historic Supreme Court ruling on eminent domain. Other issues, while not receiving the same amount of publicity, stand to have a direct effect on the residents of the 24th Senatorial District. Please

take a moment to read about some of these important measures that were addressed in the 2005 legislative session. You can also visit my state senate website at www.senaterepublicans.ct.gov for updates on events taking place at the Capitol.

If you have any specific questions regarding these issues or any issue concerning state government, please feel free to call my office at 1-800-842-1421, email me at David.Cappiello@cga.ct.gov or write to me at: Senator David Cappiello, Legislative Office Building, Room 3400, Hartford, CT 06106.

Thank you!

Sincerely,

David

Senator David Cappiello



Juice Bars

Legislation I sponsored to curb underage drinking at nightclub establishments that have so called "juice bars" became law. Under the measure, any tavern or establishment that sponsors an event that allows patrons under the age of 21 to enter MUST notify the city or town's chief municipal law enforcement office - in writing - at least 48 hours before a scheduled event. The new law allows a local police chief to designate a law enforcement officer to attend such an event at the expense of the permit holder. I have heard from many residents that unregulated juice bars have become more than just a nuisance over the years. This legislation ensures that our laws regarding underage drinking are being strictly enforced.

Gift Cards

Two years ago I sponsored a bill which was passed into law that eliminated expiration dates on gift cards and gift certificates. What many people didn't know at the time was that if the prepaid gifts were not used within three years, the value of those gifts was to be handed over to the state and presumed abandoned. The law also placed a burden on state businesses whose responsibility it was to make sure the value of such gifts was escheated to the state. That is why I crafted legislation this year to prevent the value of these gifts from ever being turned over to the state. I am pleased to announce that the measure became law this session with unanimous support by the entire General Assembly. After all, unused gift cards and certificates are not "unclaimed property." When someone buys or receives a gift card they should be able to use it whenever they choose, whether it's ten months or ten years after its purchase. Gift cards and certificates are a convenience for consumers and businesses alike, and something the state need not interfere with.



Governor Rell signs Senator Cappiello's gift card bill into law on July 11, 2005

Budget

The legislative session had some disappointments as well. Nothing was more frustrating than this year's budget process. As Ranking Member of the General Assembly's Appropriations Committee, I am extremely troubled that the new \$31.2 billion state budget creates \$1.2 billion in new spending. This year alone state spending will increase 8.8%, which amounts to the greatest one-year spending increase since Connecticut voters overwhelmingly approved the constitutional spending cap in 1992!

What's particularly disturbing is the fact that the state ended the previous fiscal year with a budget surplus of approximately \$700 million. The majority of this surplus, which was legally required to be transferred to the state's "rainy day" fund, was irresponsibly incorporated into this year's budget, creating new line items that will undoubtedly place an even greater burden on future budgets.

As for the spending cap, the budget blows through the cap by approximately \$400 million. Combine that with the state's dubious distinction of having the highest per capita debt in the nation, along with a \$5 billion unfunded liability in the Teachers' Retirement Fund, and the state's financial picture is reason for concern.

Taxes

The budget also contains some new taxes, most notably the enactment of a new estate tax. Since the mid 1990s, Connecticut has been phasing out the so-called "death tax" in an effort to prevent people from leaving the state once they retire. After all, Connecticut is one of only seven states that tax pensions, so the repeal of this tax was important for Connecticut to remain competitive with other states that did not have either of these taxes in place. Now any resident or nonresident who owns an estate valued at over \$2 million is subject to a tax of anywhere between 5.085% to 16%. To make matters even worse, the tax was made retroactive to January 1, 2005.

Proposal to Eliminate Car Tax - REJECTED

While Democratic leaders were looking for ways in which to raise taxes, they were busy rejecting new ideas. This year I called for the elimination of local property tax on automobiles. Car taxes account for only 8% of municipal revenue in Connecticut, and a large portion of that goes into the administrative costs associated with collecting the tax. Under my plan, homeowners could apply their entire state income tax credit to their home rather than their car.



Senator Cappiello with Senator Lou DeLuca at a recent press conference at the State Capitol